5. An instructional apparatus, comprising:

a memory medium storing a vocal message prerecorded as telephone quality voice input; and

a playback terminal linked by a transmissive path to the memory medium, wherein the playback terminal is adapted to reproducibly retrieve the vocal message from the memory medium upon receiving from a bar code reader a bar code signal corresponding to the vocal message, wherein the bar code signal results from scanning of a bar code label attachable to a product, and wherein the vocal message is indicative of an identifiable characteristic associated with the product.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the memory medium is located at a site remote from that of the playback terminal, and wherein the transmissive path comprises a radio-linked or infrared-linked path.

7. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the memory medium comprises one or more compact disks.

8. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the vocal message is prerecorded by a manufacturer of the product.

9. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the vocal message comprises a voice familiar to a user of the product.

10. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the identifiable characteristic associated with the product comprises the content of the product.

11. The apparatus of claim 5, further comprising a speaker coupled to the playback terminal, wherein the speaker is operable to reproduce and vocalize the vocal message as telephone quality voice output.

12. A method for providing product information, said method comprising:

receiving a bar code signal from a bar code reader, wherein the bar code signal results from scanning of a bar code label attachable to a product; and

retrieving a prerecorded vocal message corresponding to the bar code signal from a memory medium, wherein the vocal message is prerecorded as telephone quality voice input, and wherein the vocal message is indicative of an identifiable characteristic associated with the product.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein said retrieving comprises receiving the vocal message from the memory medium over a radio-linked or infrared-linked path to a remote location.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein the memory medium comprises one or more compact disks.

15. The method of claim 12, wherein the vocal message is prerecorded by a manufacturer of the product.

16. The method of claim 12, wherein the vocal message comprises a voice familiar to a user of the product.

17. The method of claim 12, wherein the identifiable characteristic associated with the product comprises the content of the product.

18. An instructional apparatus, comprising:

a memory medium storing a prerecorded, non-synthesized audio signal; and

a playback terminal linked by a transmissive path to the memory medium, wherein the playback terminal is adapted to reproducibly retrieve the audio signal from the memory medium upon receiving from a bar code reader a bar code signal corresponding to the audio signal, wherein the bar code signal results from scanning of a bar code label attachable to a product, and wherein the audio signal is indicative of an identifiable characteristic associated with the product.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the memory medium is located at a site remote from that of the playback terminal, and wherein the transmissive path comprises a radio-linked or infrared-linked path.

20. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the memory medium comprises one or more compact disks.

21. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the audio signal is prerecorded by a manufacturer of the product.

22. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the identifiable characteristic associated with the product comprises the content of the product.

23. The apparatus of claim 18, further comprising a speaker coupled to the playback terminal, wherein the speaker is operable to reproduce and make audible the audio signal as telephone quality audio output.

24. A method for providing product information, said method comprising:

receiving a bar code signal from a bar code reader, wherein the bar code signal results from scanning of a bar code label attachable to a product; and

retrieving a prerecorded, non-synthesized audio signal corresponding to the bar code signal from a memory medium, wherein the audio signal is indicative of an identifiable characteristic associated with the product.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein said retrieving comprises receiving the audio signal from the memory medium over a radio-linked or infrared-linked path to a remote location.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein the memory medium comprises one or more compact disks.

27. The method of claim 24, wherein the audio signal is prerecorded by a manufacturer of the product.

28. The method of claim 24, wherein the identifiable characteristic associated with the product comprises the content of the product.

29. An instructional apparatus, comprising:

a bar code reader operable to scan a bar code label attachable to a product and produce a corresponding bar code signal;

a listening station comprising a speaker and coupled to the bar code reader, wherein the listening station is adapted to receive the bar code signal from the bar code reader, to receive a vocal message corresponding to the bar code signal, and to reproduce and vocalize the vocal message, wherein the vocal message is prerecorded as telephone quality voice input, and wherein the vocal message is indicative of an identifiable characteristic associated with the product; and

a retrieval system remotely coupled to the listening station, wherein the retrieval system comprises a memory medium storing the vocal message, and wherein the retrieval system is adapted to reproducibly retrieve the vocal message from the memory medium and transmit the vocal message to the listening station.

30. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the retrieval system is remotely coupled to the listening station using a radio-linked or infrared-linked path.

31. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the memory medium comprises one or more compact disks.

32. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the vocal message is prerecorded by a manufacturer of the product.

33. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the vocal message comprises a voice familiar to a user of the product.

34. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the identifiable characteristic associated with the product comprises the content of the product.

35. An instructional apparatus, comprising:

a bar code reader operable to scan a bar code label attachable to a product and produce a corresponding bar code signal;

a listening station comprising a speaker and coupled to the bar code reader, wherein the listening station is adapted to receive the bar code signal from the bar code reader, to receive a non-synthesized prerecorded audio signal corresponding to the bar code signal, and to reproduce and make audible the audio signal, wherein the audio signal is indicative of an identifiable characteristic associated with the product; and

a retrieval system remotely coupled to the listening station, wherein the retrieval system comprises a memory medium storing the audio signal, and wherein the retrieval system is adapted to reproducibly retrieve the audio signal from the memory medium and transmit the audio signal to the listening station.

36. The apparatus of claim 35, wherein the retrieval system is remotely coupled to the listening station using a radio-linked or infrared-linked path.

37. The apparatus of claim 35, wherein the memory medium comprises one or more compact disks.

38. The apparatus of claim 35, wherein the audio signal is prerecorded by a manufacturer of the product.

39. The apparatus of claim 35, wherein the identifiable characteristic associated with the product comprises the content of the product.